

For Immediate Release

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**Opening Statement of Commissioner Rosemary Rodriguez at EAC Public Meeting in
Kansas City, Missouri**

I am honored to have been appointed to the United States Election Assistance Commission. Over the past month, as I have gotten to know my new colleagues and have learned about their diverse backgrounds and experiences, I have grown to respect their abilities, and appreciate their efforts, in establishing the Commission from scratch. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank them personally for welcoming me as a new member of the EAC.

For most of you, I am a stranger, so with the Chair's permission, I will give a very brief summary of my qualifications to serve on the EAC. I am a native of Denver, Colorado. I previously served as the Clerk and Recorder for the City and County of Denver, where I oversaw elections that were held in Denver. I also ran for elective office, and was elected to the Denver City Council. But long before I, myself, served in government, and for a span of more than three decades, I have performed volunteer work, much of which was for the purpose of increasing voter registration and voter empowerment. As a volunteer, I came to learn that most of the people with whom I worked desperately wanted to participate in our democracy. But they did not have access to information – information that all of us here enjoy – that allowed them to enter the gateway to civic participation. And among the most gratifying experiences of my life is that of helping people grasp the knowledge and tools that allow them to become fully participating citizens.

I am one of four Commissioners. Like my colleagues, I hope to make a mark on the election process in this Country. And the mark I hope to make is a simple one: I want to continue to increase voter registration and voter empowerment. Like many people, I have strong convictions about some things. And I will be honest with you, when it comes to elections, my foremost conviction is for the voter. I want eligible voters to have unfettered, uncomplicated and unimpeded access to the voting booth.

That is not to say that I am naïve about the voting process. My experience as an election official has tempered my conviction with a real understanding of the challenges that election officials experience in day-to-day election operations. So I will not be looking to impose new and burdensome expectations on election officials. I will, however, be looking for realistic, manageable ways to provide voters with the access that I hold so dear.

A second conviction that I hold – and I hold it fiercely – is that, in general, decisions made by the government, and decisions made by the EAC in particular, should be done in the full light of day, and in as open and as transparent a process as possible. For the most part, the processes of the EAC are done in sunshine, and I applaud the EAC's openness. The EAC, however, does have one process that is not open. It is the practice of the "tally vote." The tally vote is one that is circulated, generally agreed upon by consensus, and then made public. But while the outcome is made public, the process by which that outcome is reached is not. I hope that the EAC's staff

briefings and deliberations can be done on the record, and I believe there is interest among Commissioners to discuss this issue.

My final conviction – perhaps in fairness it should be called a bias – has to do with the value of being an open-minded learner. I appreciate those who are willing to discuss, and truly to consider, different points of view. I also appreciate those who, when presented with a better option, are able to recognize its value. And I appreciate those who, when presented with an opportunity to improve the way in which things are done, take the opportunity. I will work hard to be such a person.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you, with my other colleagues, and with the audience here today.

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